

# THE CORRESPONDENT.

*Magna est Veritas et Prevalebit.*

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NO. 9.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

For the Correspondent.

### BIBLE INCONSISTENCIES.

Mr. Editor: I have often been amused, or rather surprised to observe with what blind fanatical veneration, Christians, of every denomination, view the Bible. Men of good talents and education, may be seen in nearly every town, who spend their lives in eulogising it, and branding all who do not concur with them, with the epithets, "Infidels," "enemies of God," "lovers of darkness rather than light," and as many other similar phrases (a proof of their Christian charity,) as their ingenuity and learning can invent.—But let us carefully peruse this book, and instead of finding it the consistent word of God, and an object of awe and veneration, we shall be continually presented with the most extravagant absurdities—with all the superstitious notions which characterized every ancient nation, and with a blood-thirsty spirit, and savage barbarity, by command (as it is asserted) of the Almighty, from which every mind possessing the least principle of humanity, and which is not under the thralldom of superstition and prejudice, will naturally turn with horror and disgust. It is my intention, however, in this communication, to point out a single inconsistency in the first book of the Bible:

The first chapters in Genesis pretend to give an account of the creation, &c. in chronological order.—

Verse 1st of chapter iv. says, "And Adam knew his wife and she conceived and bare Cain." "2. And she again bare his brother Abel."

It then proceeds to tell about the murder committed by Cain, on Abel, his brother, which ended in his being cursed by the Lord, as a fugitive and vagabond. Cain said his punishment was greater than he could bear, and that every one that found him would slay him. Pray tell me, Mr. Editor, who "*every one*" was? Cain's father and mother were the only persons, except himself, who, at that time, were on earth. But to pass by this absurdity, and the no less absurd idea of his going out from the presence of an omnipresent God, into the land of Nod, let us take a glance at what he did when there. We are informed that he knew his wife; but, who was his wife? Was it his sister? No; for Cain was the only child, at that time, which Adam had living, and of course there was no female, except Eve. Again: Cain built a city. But here it is very natural to inquire, who assisted him in building it? And who did he find to inhabit it? Were it not for the circumstance that he was then *out of the presence of the Lord*, it might be argued that he had divine assistance; but, that being out of the question, we have nothing to do but to *banish Reason and believe the Bible*. The fact is, it is all a fiction, and its author had not ingenuity enough to guard against the grossest inconsistencies, which alone are sufficient to

pronounce its condemnation to every mind that will read and reflect with candor and impartiality.

I am aware, Mr. Editor, that if I were known to be the author of these remarks by the people of the vicinity in which I live, I should be stigmatized as a cold-blooded wretch, who ought to be avoided by every professor of *Christianity*. But, thank God, I have a mind of my own, which is not to be awed by the threats, the scorn, or the derision of any man; and I shall never secret my opinion behind the cloak of Christianity, in order to court the favor of those biggoted exclusion spirits, who imagine that they were made to rule, and we to obey. I have experienced some of the *fruits* of Christianity, and therefore know how I ought to appreciate them. I am yet young, but my youth has not shielded me from the attacks, or rather the scoffs (for they carefully avoid coming out in fair and manly argument) of those who are ever exclaiming, "*Christian charity!*"—Notwithstanding, however, all the disadvantages under which we, advocates of the rights of man, are placed, I think we have reason to rejoice that the spirit of truth, which has so long laid dormant, is re-kindled, and that we have an opportunity of informing "*the world,*" that we are in possession of that *Reason* which was given us by our God, and what is still more, that *we shall exercise it*. The truth, I am confident, must ultimately prevail,—and I trust the time is not far distant, when the chains which hold the human mind in mental slavery will be severed in twain—when superstitious bigotry will fall before the light of Reason, and man left to the full enjoyment of those faculties bestowed upon him by a benevolent creator.

A. R.

For the Correspondent.

#### HERESY.

Mr. Editor: I reside in a small country village where the community is divided into several *religious* sects; all, however, under the title of Christians; and as is usual in such divisions, each sect bearing the other a most implacable hatred.—You may see them on a Sunday wending their way with solemn step to their respective places of "public worship"—the husband to one, the wife to another, and, as is frequently the case, the son to a third—eyeing each other askance, with looks of contempt, pity, or dread, according to the light in which they hold each others opinions. I attend the meetings of these societies alternately, not only to drive away the tedious hours of a *sabbath*, but to mark both the weakness, and inconsistency of which human nature is capable, where prejudice gets the better of reason; and to note the low artifices they employ to subvert each others doctrines, and to render them odious in the minds of their deluded hearers. The most dexterous and persevering in waging pulpit warfare, are the trinitarians, who, armed with the intimidating charge of *heresy*, at one fell sweep consign their opponents to the infernal regions of his Satanic majesty—his devilship being invested with, and officiating in the elevated station of chief jailor.

It was but the other day that one of these "reverend" dignitaries was holding forth, with no little excitement, on the degeneracy into which the world was fast receding, and declaiming most bitterly against the *damnable haresies* (as he termed them) which he said were fast encroaching on the "*true faith.*"—Among his audience was an illiterate rustic, a Mr. ———, who seemed to listen with uncommon atten-

tion to the clamorous jargon of the pulpiteer, whose words, owing to the thinness and stillness of the congregation, reverberated in the cold, spacious galleries,

"Thundering, roaring,  
Like a cataract pouring  
O'er a mountain rock."

Returning home, Mr. ——— was asked how he liked the sermon. His countenance beaming with delight, and shrugging up his shoulders, he exclaimed, "Ah, I've lived beside these *damnable Harrises* two years, and a more damnable crew never existed!"

The case was—he had lived beside a family of the name of *Harris*, whose ill will he had incurred by his ungenerous and crabbed disposition. This family consisted of several unruly boys, who were so persevering in their schemes of roguery against Mr. ———, that he could seldom pillow his head at night without being molested by some trick they were playing upon him. As he supposed his minister was hurling his denunciations against his malicious neighbors, he had listened with intense interest; and as a mark of approbation for the important services rendered him, he presented his reverence with a *cheese*! J. M.

For the Correspondent.

#### THE COUNCIL OF NICE.

Mr. Editor: There is one omission, in my account of the Council of Nice, published in your 4th number, which, as it confirms what I have there said as to the deceptions resorted to by the clergy, to give their proceedings an appearance of divine sanction, may as well be supplied. Nicephorus, Baronius, and Aurelius Peruginus, inform us, that two bishops named Chrysante and Musonius, dying whilst the Council was held, and it being considered necessary to have their signatures, in order to ren-

der the proceedings valid, the book containing these was carried to the tomb of the deceased. The night was passed in prayer; guards were placed around the tomb in the manner they are stated to have been placed at the tomb of Jesus, and next day it was found that the defunct had added their signatures! Thus the Christians have *two* miracles, on which their faith in the divine authenticity of the new testament books is founded. Notwithstanding this, it appears to me, considering the absurdities and contradictions contained in these books, that unless some other means had been adopted to give them currency than those called *supernatural*, they never would have acquired their present importance.

In spite of the decrees of Constantine and Theodosius, by which the writings of Arius, as well as the gospels and epistles rejected by the Council of Nice, were ordered to be burned, many fragments of these are to be found in the works of the early fathers; and a few of the books almost entire, which had been secreted, have reached even to our day. These are called *Apocryphal*; but when we find whole passages in the writings of the Christians of the first and second centuries taken from these apocryphal books, and which are not in the version adopted by the church, we cannot regard the one as more authentic than the other. In fact, if any of them are entitled to that character, the rejected writings seem to claim the preference from their *priority* as to date. Before the time of St. Justin, who wrote his "Apology for the Christians" in the year 140, the gospels attributed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are not once mentioned by the Apostolical Fathers; although the names of those now called apocryphal, frequently occur, and numerous extracts



are given from them. The obvious conclusion from this fact is, that the former were not in existence, while the latter alone were in use in the early ages of Christianity.

It cannot be too often repeated, that a system of religion which depends on creeds, evidently of human invention; on writings, liable to be altered and interpolated by interested and designing men, is unworthy of an infinitely intelligent Deity; who, if he had intended to give a different revelation of his will from that contained in Nature, would have done it in such a way as to *command* universal attention, and respecting which there could not *possibly* have existed a conflicting opinion in the habitable globe. Do we find in Judaism, in Christianity, in Mahometism, or in any other system of religion depending on similar authority, these undeniable marks of Omnipotence? Does not the very existence of these distinct and discordant sects demonstrate that they are not of divine origin? They all pretend, no doubt, to this high authority. But it would be the grossest of all absurdities to suppose that a perfect Deity could be the author of so many contradictory systems. They are all the invention of priests—an order of men totally useless in society; and who, though they are constantly urging their credulous dupes to “study” their sacred books, and telling them they are so plain, so easily understood that “he that runneth may read;” have been for ages disputing with each other about their true meaning. As a source of *emolument*, however, the priests of Christianity in this country have, perhaps, greater inducements to maintain the bible, than the priests of any other religion. This at once explains the ardor with which they espouse every project tending to multiply copies of that book. The

sums of money which this traffic brings into their coffers, and of which they have the sovereign control, are incalculable. Hence their enthusiasm in supporting bible and tract societies; and hence their vituperations against those who dare to question the purity of their motives. Deprive them of these and other sources of revenue; compel them to adopt the frugal lives of the apostles, and to work for a subsistence like *honest* men, and their zeal would speedily evaporate. On the other hand, let a law be passed, by which a handsome income would be secured to them, as is done in countries having an *established* religion, and many years would not elapse ere they became as indifferent about the circulation of the bible, and the care of souls, as Dr. Forrest, bishop of Dunkeld, in Scotland, who said of himself, “I thank God, I have lived well these many years, and never knew the old or new testament. I content myself with my pontifical.” VERITAS.

THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY; OR,  
TRUTH DRAWN FROM FABLES.

CHAPTER II.

(Continued from our last.)

It is well known that the Gnostics were a sect of illuminati, who blended together the Jewish traditions and writings, and their application to the coming of a Messiah, a Christ, or a deliverer, with the dogmas of Zoroaster and the magi, and with the doctrines of Pythagoras and the reveries of Plato concerning the logos, word, or second person of the trinity, called the son of God. These notions were taken from the Brahminical religion, and from India they were introduced into Egypt and Greece. Brahmah, Vischnu, and Chiven form the Indian trinity, and Vischnu is an emanation of God, whose incarnations

are numerous, and all had for their object to deliver mankind of some great evil caused by the malignant genii. His incarnation under the human form, and under the name of Chreeshna, or Chrishen, was, and is still, the most celebrated by the Brahmins. Chreeshna was to them what Jesus became afterwards to the Christians. The Indian Chreeshna is nothing else but a symbol of the sun, as all those conversant with the Hindoo mythology perfectly know.

But to return to the Gnostics: they maintained that God is infinite perfection, and a source of light, from which issued continual emanations, (called eons, spirits, or genii) of many different orders, good and bad. They supposed that the planets and celestial bodies were eons, and that Jesus was also an eon of a superior order. Many philosophers among the Gentiles asserted their Gods to be eons or spirits, and a great number of Christians adopted the same notions respecting Jesus, who was considered as an eon by the Montanists. Others, as the Manicheans, admitted the two principles of Zoroaster, the good and the evil, who were in a continual state of opposition, exactly as the Christians believe God and the Devil to be constantly opposed to one another. The Valentinians confounded the *word* of the gospel with the *logos* of Plato. In short, the leading sects of primitive Christians were confessedly in a great measure disciples of ancient religious and schools of metaphysical philosophy; and the mixture of Judaism with their mythological and spiritual tenets, served only to connect the new fangled creed with the prevailing idea of the approaching end of the world, and the coming of a Messiah, or deliverer, rather de-

sired than expected by the Jews. Moreover, the new sectaries were proud to form a new religion grounded on old prophecies little or hardly known to any but the Hebrews; and although they took all their dogmas and ceremonies from the Jews, the Mithriacs, and other religious systems, they gave themselves out for a new sect, entirely distinct from the old ones, and were as anxious not to be confounded with the Jews, as to keep distinct from the other religions, which they had slightly modified. The same thing took place long after with the Mahometans. This was an easy matter, from the great secrecy kept by each of the numerous sects of Christians, and from the general ignorance of most of the adepts concerning the real character and doctrines of the ancient religions.

It should be recollected, that, in those ages, the initiated alone had any clear notions of the true meaning of the symbolical mysteries and figurative language, in which were couched all religious legends and creeds. The people were only admitted to the public ceremonies, which consisted merely of outward representations calculated to strike the senses of the multitude, who believed as facts and real historical events what was only typical and emblematic. Thus the vulgar, and even many among the better informed, if not initiated, or profoundly instructed in some school of philosophy, took the Gods for real beings, and understood the figurative and hieroglyphic language in its strict sense, and had not the least doubt concerning the adventures of Jupiter, of Apollo, Hercules, Bacchus, Osiris, Isis, &c. They believed that these deities had dwelt among men, had died and come to life again, had begot children, and in every respect

resembled man, except in possessing higher powers that enabled them to perform prodigies. As the initiations were generally expensive, and required certain qualifications, and no small degree of firmness in the candidate to go through the arduous trials to which they were subjected, the number of the adepts was not considerable, until those rites began to fall into discredit, partly from the admission to the mysteries having become too easy. It was a little before this time that the Christian sect was greedily adopted by the lowest orders of society, as offering them an initiation perfectly suited to the vulgar, founded on community of property, mutual fraternity, equality, and contempt of learning. Thus the vilest populace found themselves at once elevated, and placed, as it were, on a footing with the respected adepts of the mysteries of Osiris, Isis, of Eleusis, and Mithra. To this cause, as we have already said, is in a great measure to be attributed the introduction and rapid progress of Christianity. It prevailed over the more ancient parent religions, because these had grown old and began to lose their ground, while the recent ramification of them was vigorous and bold. To the attractions of novelty, it joined the no less powerful allurements of the republican principles of equality and fraternity, still more appreciated in times of an oppressive despotism, and an overbearing aristocracy. But as soon as the leaders of the church and the chiefs among the Christians became powerful and rich, they proved the greatest tyrants and oppressors, and they exceeded in vice and depravity all preceding sects. At first simple, weak and austere, like their models, the Essenes, they soon changed this rule for a course of dissipation and debauchery, ex-

actly in the same manner as they adopted the worship of images, of saints, or idols, after having persecuted with the most furious rage, as idolaters, those sects of Christians who in this respect had followed the example of the Gentiles. Thus has Christianity appropriated to itself or discarded the different dogmas and practices of paganism, as it best suited the purposes of the leaders of the sect who became predominant from the protection of the Roman emperors since the time of Constantine.

I shall now proceed to show that the Christian religion is absolutely nothing else but an altered copy of the ancient religions of Sabeism, and that Jesus, in so far as he is a mystical hero, is the vernal sun, a messiah, or mediator, like Mithra, Chreeshna, Osiris, Atys, &c. But before entering into this interesting parallel, I will make two short quotations, which prove, beyond a doubt, that the learned writers among the Christians believed with the vulgar of the Gentiles, that the Gods of Paganism were real individuals, and not mere emblems of nature and of its elements and energies, and symbols of the sun and planets. The first quotation is from Lactantius, book iv. chap. 27. "If (says he) you call one of those individuals who possess the power of evocating spirits from the inferior regions, (Hell) they will certainly force Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, and father Saturn to rise and to answer the questions put to them; but in vain will they attempt to evocate Jesus Christ; he will not obey their exorcisms. Do you know why? Because he remained only two days in Hell!"

This shews at once the great ignorance of Lactantius, and at the same time it explains why the Chris-



tians were so easily made to believe that Jesus was a God, and a man in all respects similar to the Gods of Paganism, who were said to have been put to death, to have been in hell, and to have thence ascended to heaven and triumphed over the angels of darkness. It is impossible to trace the origin of Christianity more clearly to the common sources whence all religions have sprung, viz. the adoration of the sun and other celestial bodies under different emblems, figures, and names, and the application to the powers of these bodies, of a train of figurative language, representing as historical facts what are only allegorical descriptions, such as poets have ever used in all ages and nations. The ancient Egyptians represented to the eyes what the authors of religious mysteries and poets sung to the ear; both used figurative language and gave a body to mere abstractions, and a human character and passions to the sun and the planets; thus animating all nature. In this system of allegorical mythology, the sun under the name of Osiris, of Apollo, of Atys, of Serapis, was represented as born in winter; as coming into full life in spring; as being put to death by the spirit of darkness; and as returning to life in spring. The moon under the name of Isis, was represented as a virgin, the mother of the sun, and his spouse, because Osiris regained his power at the full moon of spring, and at the same time was the source and cause of her fullness. So, while the vulgar deplored the death of Osiris, of Atys, and other emblems of the sun, over their tombs where the priests told the multitude the body of the God was buried; and exulted at the resurrection of the same deity, believing the real historical existence of the supposed

events; the priests and the initiated alone understood the true signification of such allegorical tales and representations. The great secrecy kept on all such subjects by the ancients, has thrown such an obscurity over the history of antiquity, that it is often impossible to say where allegory stops and history begins.

Let us now hear Chœremon, a celebrated Egyptian priest, who lived in the first century:—"What those who say that the sun is the Demiurgus, (or great architect) and likewise what is asserted concerning Osiris and Isis, and all the sacred fables, may be resolved into the stars, and phases, occultations and risings of these, or into the increments and decrements of the moon, or into the course of the sun, or the nocturnal and diurnal hemisphere, or into the river Nile. And, in short, the Egyptians resolve all things into physical, and nothing into incorporeal and living essences. Porphyry says, "The Egyptians admit the existence of no other Gods except what are called the planets, the Gods that give completion to the Zodiac, and such as rise together (in the heavens) with these, and likewise the sections (of the signs of the Zodiac) into decans (or divisions of a sign into three parts of ten degrees each) and the horoscopes. They also admit the existence of what are called the powerful leaders, whose names are to be found in the calendars, together with their ministrant offices, their risings and settings, and their signification of future events."

In another part of his letter to Anebo, an Egyptian priest, he puts the following question, after having mentioned the death of Osiris, the scattering of his limbs by Typhon, and other things connected with the legend of that God: "What also is

the meaning of those mystic narrations which say that a certain divinity is unfolded into light from mire, that he is seated on the lotus, that he sails in a ship, and that he changes his forms every how, according to the signs of the Zodiac? For thus, they say, he presents himself to the view, and ignorantly adapt the peculiar passion of their imagination to the God himself. But if these things are asserted symbolically, being symbols of the powers of this divinity, I request an interpretation of these symbols." And Macrebius says, in express terms, that all the Gods are nothing else but the different powers of the Sun.

(To be Continued.)

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## The Correspondent.

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*Magna est Veritas et Prevalet.*

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NEW-YORK, MARCH 24, 1827.

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### RATIONAL EDUCATION.

Let me educate a child of the most rigid Hindoo, Mahometan, or Jew, from infancy to manhood, and he shall be a most bigotted Christian.

Public attention has lately been very much directed to education, and people are becoming more and more sensible that a knowledge of *words* is widely different from a practical knowledge of *things*. The system of education hitherto pursued in schools and colleges, has been principally confined to sounds and signs; to inculcating abstruse notions of imaginary things; the infallibility of the opinions and judgment of the teachers, and implicit obedience to their commands; while practical knowledge, by which we mean a knowledge of the analogy, difference, properties and use of *things*, even of those by which we are surrounded and in the daily habit of using, was left to be acquired at any time, and

in any way, according to the ability, taste and means of the individuals. Hence so many have left these institutions mere book worms, diseased in body from *intemperance* in study, and altogether unprepared for the active and precarious scenes of life, through which many have had to pass; while others, vain of their supposed superior acquirements, which, comparatively, are of little use in a well regulated republic, look with contempt on the really useful, because necessary arts of life: and treat as a being of an inferior grade, the honest hard-working mechanic or plodding husbandman, whose industry contributes to support them as paupers on public bounty, they giving nothing but words in exchange for their expenditure.

There has lately been established in Philadelphia, an "Institution of *Practical Education*," in contradistinction to the *old system*; where, as far as consistent with the existing prejudices, children are educated rationally: where neither words without meaning, nor idle tales are hammered with a ferrula or a cane into their infantine brains. Nor are they flogged if, through ignorance or inadvertence, their teachers fail to adapt their language to the ill-formed capacities of their pupils; but where the studies are suited to the age, and rendered familiar and interesting.

The children are divided into classes according to their organization, or intellectual capacity and age; and part of their time in the male and female departments, is devoted to such physical exercises as are suited to their respective ages and sex.

At present there are but four principal teachers, and one sub-teacher: but it is intended ultimately, to have several professors; when, the classes being properly arranged, would remain but a given time at any one stu-



dy, or under any one teacher; and by a regular change, that disgusting monotony would be prevented, which frequently renders insufficient the exertions of the best teachers; and the otherwise most interesting studies, altogether insipid. The confusion arising from different classes pursuing at the same moment different courses of instruction in the same apartment and under the same teacher, is likewise prevented. There is but *one* common object, to which the attention of all for a certain time is directed.

The course of instruction pursued is, as far as possible, by presenting objects to the pupils, accompanied by familiar lectures. When objects cannot be had, models, paintings, engravings, &c. are obtained. By these means children early acquire a taste for the natural sciences; are taught to observe the analogy and difference between the most minute objects; to reflect on them, and to express their opinions by words, the meaning of which they must understand, because it is definite and fixed. Thus they are early taught to *think* for themselves; and from those things which they know *certainly*, they are led to the consideration of those abstruse subjects which they can only know *analogically*. By teaching them to observe the difference between a false, an imperfect, and a correct perception, and to distinguish an idea or thought of a reality, from an imagination or thought of what does not exist, their judgments will be matured, and they will not fail to distinguish between truth and error. The information which the children obtain, is derived principally from their own practical experience, it being necessary for the judicious teacher to point out the road, and their natural curiosity will induce them to follow it. They are encouraged to notice errors which their teachers make,

either in calculation or in observation; and books, except for writing and drawing, are carefully withheld from them while in school, until they are able to reason on abstruse subjects and detect with facility errors in authors, either by their own experience, or by analogical inference; when political and ecclesiastical histories, fables, fairy tales, and "the holy scriptures" are put into their hands, which they are permitted to read, and on which they comment with freedom.

The priesthood have not yet attacked the mode of instruction pursued in this institution, though it is daily expected; but when they do, it will probably be very cautiously, as the founder shields himself by stating, "Since we confine ourselves to teaching nothing but what you and every one else must acknowledge to be *true*, because capable of demonstration, what injury can it do the cause of true religion? Teaching children to discriminate between what all sectarians admit to be true, or false, will only confirm them the stronger in the religion they embrace as true. It is certain it will prevent them from receiving error; but your religion *being true*, they cannot be prevented from receiving and retaining it by this method of instruction."

By an association of a number of teachers of talent, should the institution be sufficiently encouraged, the expense of having a child educated according to this plan would be 300 per cent. less than by the old system; and the children would have advantages of acquiring knowledge by no means generally possessed. An institution of a similar kind is much wanted in New-York, where children may be taken, even in infancy, and where their dispositions might be formed that would greatly facilitate their future improvement, and have a salutary influence on their future

conduct. To establish such an institution on a permanent base, needs but the united efforts of a few friends of rationality and truth, as we have reason to believe we should have no difficulty in procuring teachers to take the charge of it, of proved talents and experience.

\*\*\*The Editor of the "United States Gazette," published at Philadelphia, has appropriated a column of his paper to a notice of the *Correspondent*, in which, and in imitation of some of his brethren of the periodical press, he deals out abundance of misrepresentation and abuse, without advancing a single argument in defence of his opinions, or in attempting, in any shape, to combat our principles. He charges us with "atheism and libertinism," with "loosening the bonds of morality," and with making sport of the "creeds of ages." Yet, he says, "we have *not seen the paper, and, therefore, are not capable of judging perfectly of its merits.*"—Here, then, we have the conductor of a press calling himself "impartial," and claiming great merit for his "candor," condemning, in the most pointed and unqualified terms, a publication which he had never seen, and, on that account, acknowledges he is totally incompetent to give any opinion of its merits.

We are not in the least surprised at the course adopted by the Philadelphia editor. It is in perfect consistency with the religious system he professes, which requires *implicit faith* in all its adherents, and denounces eternal perdition on every one who presumes to *examine* its "sacred mysteries"—Nothing, therefore, remains for the advocates of this unintelligible creed, but to admire in silence, to assent to its doctrines merely because they have been taught in infancy to believe

them, and that it is the fashion to avow this belief. On the same principle, they shut their eyes, and fortify their minds against every thing having the appearance of investigation. Accustomed to hear their spiritual guides declaiming against liberal principles, they acquire the habit of considering them something horrible, calculated to demoralize society, and fit only for apostates and libertines. Hence the opinion formed of this journal by the Editor of the "United States Gazette," and hence his unblushing avowal, that he was *deciding definitively* on its contents without having perused any part of them. Away with such canting hypocrisy.

#### FREE PRESS ASSOCIATION. SECRETARY'S ADDRESS.

(Concluded from our last.)

According to Jesus, we can only be happy by being *poor in spirit*. Immediately after, he bids us be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect. To say the least of these notable maxims, it would seem that the Christians believe God to be a senseless being, destitute of all spirit; and that perfection, by which we are to attain heaven, consists in being equally stupid. Poverty of spirit, according to the explanations of the clergy, is an abject submission to the decrees of the church; and an implicit reliance on every thing it chooses to announce. It is a maxim which paralyzes our reasoning faculties, and renders us the fit instruments of despots, to perpetuate slavery, crush science, and prevent the diffusion of knowledge. A laudable ambition, a feeling of independence, a prudent respect for one's self, the direct opposites of *poverty of spirit*, must have a beneficial effect. The man who thinks well of himself, is not likely to commit an action which

would degrade him in the eyes of others. He who feels the value of independence, will never inroach on the rights of others ; and ambition, when under proper restraint, never fails to be serviceable to the individual whom it influences, and frequently proves beneficial to whole nations. Christians affect to talk with contempt of philosophy ; but notwithstanding all their lofty harrangues, it is certain that were it not for the efforts of philosophers, ignorance would extend its empire over the universe. To what do we owe, in the ancient world, these great men Aristotle, Plato, Demosthenes, Sophocles, and Euripides, but to that desire of being distinguished, of excelling their fellow men, and of inspiring them with admiration, which is altogether inconsistent with meanness of spirit? And is it not to the same desire that we owe, in modern times, the illustrious men who have been ranked for their noble deeds among the benefactors of the human race? Jesus has said, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He was right to send them *thither* ; for on earth they have been always useless.

The maxim which enjoins us to love our enemies, and not to seek redress when our property is invaded, is to open a door to iniquity and crime, and to subvert the exercise of justice. It is the first principle of nature to do every thing we can for the preservation of our lives. But if we are not to defend ourselves when attacked ; if we are quietly to submit to be knocked on the head by every lawless ruffian who may assail us, we infringe that law which requires us to promote our own welfare. If when our property is unjustly wrestled from us, we forbear to obtain restitution by an appeal to the laws, we injure our families, and tacitly give

our sanction to injustice. "Do ye unto others as you would have others do unto you," is an universal and unalterable rule. But if we permit others to assault and rob us with impunity, we countenance acts in them, unauthorized by, and contrary to the obvious meaning of this fundamental principle. Besides, to love an enemy is impossible. We may abstain from doing evil to the person by whom we are injured ; but love is an affection which can only be excited in the breast by a friendly object. The history of nations present numerous examples of generosity, and even of kindness to individuals who had caused injuries. By this course the person injured exalts himself above his enemy, and may even change the dispositions of his heart. But it is not in the nature of man to do more than stifle the desires of revenge.

Although we find Jesus expressly declaring that he came not to *destroy* the law but to *fulfil* it, it appears from the gospels that he innovated on this same law in several important particulars. In the case of divorce, Moses permitted the Jews to put away their wives whenever they became disagreeable to them. This permission, however, Jesus has thought fit to abrogate, except on the single ground of adultery. This seems a very injudicious, if not pernicious policy. Marriage is a *civil* contract, entered into for the purpose of promoting the happiness of the contracting parties, and advancing the interests of society. But it is well known, that three fourths of the matches formed, are neither beneficial to the public nor to the individuals themselves. When a woman is barren, she and her husband become, in some measure, useless to the state. By the maxim of Jesus, a husband is punished, without having deserved it,



for the faults of his wife, and the wife for the faults of the husband. If it were allowed for a man to have a second wife when the first is incapable of being a mother, or to divorce her when her temper is bad, or her conduct disagreeable, how many offences against the marriage bed and other crimes might be avoided? Two persons, who, probably, wished each other dead, and lived in constant strife, would then be at liberty to select other partners with whom they might live more cordially. What can be more unjust than to compel one to live with a person who may be constantly exciting suspicions, and who knows how to devise methods to avoid detection?

It would be an endless, and, perhaps, unprofitable task, to enter into an exposure of all the futile maxims, which the gospels ascribe to Jesus. Those we have noticed are a fair sample of the whole; and if we strip the Christian code of every thing that its framers have pilfered from the writings of other nations, we shall find little or nothing remaining applicable to the condition of rational beings living in society. It is altogether too sublimated for this world, and wherever attempts have been made to practice it, they have uniformly rendered men unsocial, enemies to the gentlest and most lawful inclinations, and perfectly useless to others. However much these precepts may be admired, however highly they may be extolled by Christians, it is undeniable that they are nowhere literally observed. Even Jesus himself, in whom we should have expected a brilliant display of those heavenly precepts which he enforced with so much ardor, was far from showing on all occasions a very scrupulous regard for justice or propriety. He had, in his famous maxim, "to him who smiteth you on the right cheek,

turn to him the left also," distinctly inculcated the doctrine of non-resistance, and a demeanor every way opposed to dissention. Yet we find him recommending it to his disciples to sell a part of their cloathing in order to enable them to purchase a sword. In another place (Luke 12 and 51) he says, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay; but rather *division*." Again he says, (c. 14 and 26) "If any man come to me, and *hate not* his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And, in order that there might be no mistake as to his meaning on this occasion, Jesus embraced the first opportunity of giving a practical illustration of his self denial, by refusing to acknowledge his mother, and some of his other relations who had come to see him.

It has been on such maxims as these that all the persecutions, bloody wars, and massacres on account of religion, have been justified by its professors.

Was it in denouncing the vengeance of heaven on the scribes and pharisees, in calling them hypocrites, blind fools, blind guides, whited sepulchres, serpents, a generation of vipers, the children of the devil, and meriting the *damnation of hell*; was it in abusive language like this that Jesus exemplified the precept, "let your conversation be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil"? Was it when, at the marriage in Cana, he chided his mother because she told him that they had drank all the wine; or when he received a blow on the cheek for speaking disrespectfully to the High Priest, that he evinced that humility and meekness so strongly recommended in the gospels?

Was it in permitting his disciples to

enter the corn fields of others, and to pluck and eat the corn without permission; in applying to his use the ass of another man without his leave; or in destroying a whole herd of swine, worth several thousand dollars to the proprietors, that he displayed that strict regard for justice, which he so frequently inculcated on his followers? Are we to consider it just, that he should have driven the money changers out of the Temple, and overturned their tables, by which they must have sustained considerable loss if not ruin, when the laws of the Jews fully authorized the pursuits of this class of men? In what light are we to view his cursing and blasting the fig tree because it did not bear fruit at a season of the year when it was impossible it could produce it! And where was the equity of *commending* the unjust steward for *cheating* his master, and holding up this conduct to his disciples as worthy of imitation?

It is not enough that in these cases, to which others could be added, we discover absurdities, inconsistencies, and folly. They display so manifest a disregard of principle and decency; so marked a contempt for every thing esteemed virtuous among men, that we must either believe the individual to whom the conduct and language is ascribed, to have been entirely destitute of all moral feeling, or that no such person ever existed.

The baneful effects which have been entailed on the human race by attempting to practice these absurd maxims, are apparent in the whole history of Christianity; and should an opportunity again offer, I may, perhaps, call your attention to the demonstration, which these terrible calamities afford, of the superiority of that religion alone worthy the consideration of rational beings—the RELIGION OF NATURE.

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#### MISCELLANEOUS.

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*National ideas of Paradise.*—Almost all nations have united to make the future abode of good spirits a garden; a name among the Assyrians synonymous with Paradise.—The Mahometans call the Paradise to which the faithful will be called, *Jannat le Nain*, the Garden of Pleasure; *Jannat aden*, the Garden of Perpetual Abode; and not unfrequently by the simple name of *Al Jannat*, the Garden, to distinguish it from all others. The Laplander believes Paradise to be situated in the centre of the snows of Sweden! The Muscogulgees imagine it among the islands of the vast Pacific. The Mexicans conceived, that those who died of wounds or were drowned, went to a cool and delightful place; there to enjoy all manner of pleasures: those who died in battle or in captivity, were wafted to the palace of the sun, and led a life of endless delight. After an abode of four years in this splendid habitation, they animated clouds, and birds of beautiful feather, and of sweet song; having at the same time, liberty to ascend to heaven or descend to earth, to suck sweet flowers and warble enchanting songs. The Tonquinese imagine the forests and mountains to be peopled with a peculiar kind of genii, who exercise an influence over the affairs of mankind; and in their ideas, relative to a state of future happiness, they regard a delightful climate, and an atmosphere, surcharged with odours, with a throne profusely covered with garlands of flowers, as the summit of celestial felicity. Among the Arabs, a fine country, with abundance of shade, form the principal object of their promised bliss. There is a tribe of America, who believe, that the souls of good

men are conveyed to a pleasant valley, abounding in gauds and other delicious fruits. The heaven of the Celts was called *Flnth-innis*, "the Island of the good and the brave;" their hell *Ifurin*, "the Island of Cold Climate." The Druids, as we are informed by Ammianus Marcellinus, believed that the souls of good men were wafted, in progressive course, from planet to planet, enjoying at every successive change a more sublime felicity than in the last.

*Christian Mercy!*—In the beginning of the fifteenth century, the persecution of the Lollards peopled the Tower of London with victims, among whom was Lord Cobham, the first person of rank in England that suffered for maintaining those doctrines which now form the basis of the Protestant church. The sentence of death on Lord Cobham had, on account of his valour, rank, and virtues, been respited, and he escaped into Wales, but was afterwards taken, and re-conducted to the Tower, where the Popish House of Commons, then sitting, prayed 'for the reverence of the Holy Trinity, and of the blessed Mary, and all the saints of Heaven, and in confirmation of the Christian faith, that the judgment formerly passed upon him should be put in execution.' And what do our readers think was the sentence for which the Commons prayed?—why, that Lord Cobham should be drawn from the town to St. Giles's Fields, hanged by the middle with a chain—a fire kindled beneath him, and thus burnt to death! The prayer of these legalized murderers was granted.

*Catholic Ignorance.*—A Tourist has recently published his remarks, on the mental degradation of the people, residing in those countries of Europe subject to the sway of the Catholic priesthood. He speaks of

the Valais, a canton of Switzerland, adjoining to Italy, the population of which is exclusively Popish; where a hundred thousand persons reside, but among whom there is not one bookseller! A single printer was found living at Sion, the capital of the canton, but he was allowed to work only under the direction of the Jesuits, who have the superintendence of education there, and printed nothing but books of devotion. At Chamberry, in France, a city which contains nearly ten thousand souls, he found a cathedral, and three other churches, two convents, and about one hundred priests: but only one bookseller, and his stock consisted but of one book, a code of French laws: "The town of Domo d'Osola," he writes, "has about three thousand inhabitants. There is no bookseller in the place—I mark this fact where it occurs, as drawing after it a thousand consequences. As we entered Italy by Isella, our baggage was searched; and the officer told us plainly, the objects he looked after were books of religion and politics—morals are left to themselves. Happily, our passports were signed by the Austrian ambassador, or we should have had to retrace our steps. On driving into the town, I was surprised to see priests, in their peculiar dress, but somewhat shabbily attired, standing about idly, or sitting in the market-place, at the doors of caberets, in company with the common people. Their jovial careless sort of look struck me as characteristic of the manners of too many of that order of persons in Italy. The chief church here is of modern Greek architecture; there are three altogether, and about fifteen priests. A convent of capuchins, suppressed by Napoleon, has just been restored. When we asked the innkeeper what curiosities there were in the town, he said, there



was only a calvary, a superstitious chapel, or temple, on some mountain, with a representation of our Saviour's passion. We are now in Italy; but oh! how fallen is it! Oh! how melancholy to think of the lost glory of the queen of nations! Ignorance, poverty, dirt, idolence, misery, vice, superstition, are but too visible on all sides. Half the time, in fact, which God assigned to man for labor, is consumed in superstitious festivals of saints; while the one day of sacred rest is desecrated to folly and sin."—These indeed are melancholy facts; but we need not be surprised at their existence. They are but natural consequences of that domination which the Roman clergy assume.—Their ascendancy can be maintained more easily over the profoundly ignorant, than over men whose superior intelligence would lead to an examination of ecclesiastical claims. It is to their interest, therefore, that knowledge should be repressed, as it was to the interest of the ancient Philistines that no smith should be found throughout all the land of Israel, lest the Hebrews should make themselves swords and spears.

*Marriage of Christ and St. Catharine.*—We extract the following article from a work entitled, "Rome in the nineteenth century":—"We paid a visit to the house of St. Catharine of Siena, where are still to be seen, besides an ugly chapel painted in fresco, the stony couch on which the poor little saint used to sleep at nights, and the very identical spot where our Saviour stood when he espoused her, and put the wedding ring on her finger! My astonishment was unutterable. I have seen the marriage of Christ and St. Catharine a thousand times in painting, but I always concluded it to be metaphorical, or thought, at most, that credulity had magnified some accidental

dream into a vision sent from Heaven; but it never once entered into my head, that any human being had imagined, or pretended that such a marriage really did take place. Yet here I was repeatedly and most solemnly assured by every body present, consisting of a priest, a lacquey, a tailor, and two women, that our Saviour actually appeared on this spot in his own proper person, invested her with the ring, and declared her his spouse! Nay, they affirmed that he carried on a most affectionate correspondence with her, and that many of his letters of conjugal love are still extant. Of these, however, I could not obtain a sight; but I saw in the public library in this city, several epistles on her side to her dear husband, Jesus Christ, and her mother-in-law the Virgin Mary. That such a legend ever should have been credited in the darkest ages of extravagant fanaticism, I could scarcely have believed; but that it should have been gravely repeated as authentic in the nineteenth century, nothing, I think, short of the evidence of my senses, could have convinced me."

*Maxims of Chilo.*—This philosopher, who was one of the "Seven Sages" of Greece, flourished 550 years before the Christian era. He was a magistrate and acted with so much sagacity and integrity, that in his old age, he said, he recollected nothing in his public conduct which gave him regret, save that in one instance, he had endeavored to screen a friend from punishment. Æsop is said to have once asked him, "how Jupiter employed himself;" he replied, "in humbling those that exalt themselves, and exalting those that abase themselves." He lived to a great age, and expired through excess of joy in the arms of his son, when he returned victorious from the olympic games. The following are some

of his maxims: Three things are difficult—to keep a secret, to bear an injury patiently, and to spend leisure time well. Visit your friends in misfortune rather than in prosperity. Never ridicule the unfortunate.—Think before you speak. Gold is tried by the touch-stone, and men by gold. Honest loss is preferable to shameful gain; by the one a man is a sufferer but once, by the other always. It is better to be loved than feared. Speak no evil of the dead. Reverence the aged. Know thyself.

*Italian Festivals.*—Few are the days which are left free in Italy to the duties of industry, and not usurped by the anniversary of some saint, by the name of some virgin, by the death of some martyr, or the festival of some apostle. The living are continually occupied about the dead; and that idleness with which the Italians are so severely taxed, becomes a matter of religious obligation, from which it is not so easy to escape. In Rome, for instance, the priest who absolves you in the morning in the tribunal of penitence, sits in that of justice in the evening to pass judgment and imprison, forming in his own person the monstrous union of the functions of parish priests, commissary of police, and justice of the peace. Like another Cerberus, and no less formidable, he barks and devours with three different mouths.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL LIBRARY.

We are authorized to state, that arrangements are now making in this city, to republish an uniform and cheap edition of all the moral and philosophical works of the most celebrated writers who have endeavored to dispel ignorance, by disseminating rational principles. The unceasing efforts of bigots and fanatics, to destroy every book that does not meet their perverted views, have rendered

works of a liberal description extremely scarce. This circumstance, together with the fact, that the demand for such works is now greater than at any former period, and must increase with the rapid increase of knowledge, cannot but insure success to the present undertaking. The publication will be speedily commenced, in *parts* of 72 pages 12 mo. at 25 cents each, and be well executed, and printed on good paper. It is intended to commence with the celebrated work entitled "*Ecce Homo!*" the publisher of which was imprisoned two years in England, and fined two hundred pounds sterling, at the instigation of the priesthood, who felt themselves unable in any other way to combat the arguments which the writer employed against their system. *Ecce Homo* will be followed by the theological writings of Paine, Palmer, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Volney, Clarke, &c.

PART I. *will be ready for delivery on the 28th March.* Subscribers to the work will then have to pay one dollar, and continue to advance the same amount on the appearance of every *fifth* part thereafter. The magnitude of the undertaking, which is intended to embrace *all* the liberal works extant, renders this arrangement absolutely necessary. Subscribers will be at liberty to withdraw their names at the close of any work, on signifying their intention to the publisher, office of the *Correspondent*.

*To Correspondents.*—The continuation of "*Moses, Jesus and Mahomet,*" is unavoidably postponed till our next.

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